



Boats at Quayside, 1907

62.68

Cambridge BOATS AND PUNTS Chronicle by Mike Petty

source : J. Wilson Fenland barge traffic. 1972 [W]

Dant, Cutter ferry history and account of barge traffic – 62 08 03b & c

Sir – I remember Ditton Docks some 70 years ago. It was then a small landing stage, long disused and out of repair. There was also a more pretentious one further down the river – Horningsea Pier we used to call it. - and I was told that in pre-railway days this had been extensively used. My father would speak of the times, before the present locks were installed, when strings of barges were kept waiting sometimes for several weeks for the river to rise sufficiently for them to come up. They carried coal and corn to Mill Lane or timber and sand to Walnut Tree Lane (now Avenue). Dant of Dant's Ferry had a fleet of barges at that time – A. Cox 37 02 13

1890

1890s

Dant owned Cutter, first steam tug to work on Cam; in 1890s the barge business, then in decline, was auctioned [W.16]

1897 03 18

Fred Richardson, foreman of the second gangs of lighters belonging to Messrs Brown and Goodman, met with a serious accident which ultimately proved fatal. It appears one of the lighters ran aground at Littleport on the same side as the horse. To get the boat off again block and tackle were fixed on the opposite bank, and the rope from the boat to the through the pulley to the horse. The rope got entangled around his neck, quite crushing the windpipe, and the poor fellow was taken more dead than alive up to the Globe Inn, Littleport where an operation was resorted to. We regret to learn that Mr Richardson died at three o'clock. The unfortunate victim was conscious when his friends visited him yesterday 1897 03 18

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1898 09 14

Otter and Otter Hound advert CDN 1898 09 14, p3

1899 06 13

Logan boat builder creditors, 1899 06 13p3 * & 14th p3

1900

1900 08 18

Sir -. I have hired boats at nearly every place in Cambridge and always found the boat-people most obliging. The charge has been 1s each person for a whole day. Today I hired a boat for one hour and was charged 1s 6d. I asked why the extra cost. "Well sir, bicycling is off, and the river is more in demand. We have had a bad season, so are now making up for it". Vacation is a strange time for raising the prices. It would be as well to arrange the prices before starting on a trip, as that would save a lot of wrangling when a party returns. – "A lover of the river" 00 08 18

1901 06 01

After the rowing races at Ditton Corner & when the crush of small boats was at its height, a steam launch crowded with people endeavoured to force its way through the block of boats. Frantic endeavours were made to get out of its way but the launch crashed into a boat which contained two men, who were thrown into the river. Shouts from bystanders eventually brought the launch to a standstill but no effort was made to render any assistance. What would have been the results had the boat contained ladies. All launches should have a look-out man on the bow as it is impossible to see from the stern what is happening in front CDN 1901 06 10

1904 06 10

A serious accident occurred following the 'Mays'. After the half-past six race there is usually a scramble from the course to the boat-yards and collisions are frequent. But when a steamer and pleasure craft collide the consequences are unpleasant for the occupants of the smaller boats. Two of these were overturned and their eight occupants, including ladies, were precipitated into the water but happily all were rescued. One lady excited admiration for her cool behaviour in a perilous position and managed to climb into one of the small craft. 1904 06 10

1904 06 13

The Rev N.W. Shelton, vicar of Old Chesterton and his party, half-a-dozen in all, met with an unpleasant experience at the 'Mays'. The party, in an ordinary rowing boat, had left the scene of the action and arrive, after the usual difficulty, at the Pike and Eel ferry where their progress was barred for a time. During the period of waiting a big houseboat, towed by a horse, 'crashed' into the boat which it sunk and precipitated the occupants into the water. After a short period of excitement the party, which included several ladies, were landed safely on the houseboat, which proceeded on its course. It is an abominable shame that these large houseboats are allowed to travel on the river when it is crowded with smaller craft. It was going at from six to seven miles an hour and was in charge of a small boy on a horse. 1904 06 13

1905 08 29

A number of fishermen and fireman had an enjoyable outing on board the 'Majesty'. On arriving at Upware they sat down to one of Host Peachey's liberal dinners after which the fishermen went fishing and the remainder had a trip to Ely, returning for tea and games. The return journey was enlivened by songs accompanied by Mr Sid Smith on his banjo. They reached home by 10 pm. 05 08 29d

1906

Herbert Charles Banham starts boat building, Riverside 53 01 01 [1.1, 2.1]

1906 05 08

Mr H.C. Banham has launched a motor boat service on the Cam. Last season he ran trips to Clayhithe with steam launches but now 'The Enterprise' has been specially built to carry 50 people. The body is of oak with a snug cabin with glass superstructure where one can retire when winds are too boisterous. It is powered by a twelve horse power engine giving speeds of 7½ mph without any of the 'blacks' given off by a steam launch and an entire absence of smell. It glides through the water so smoothly one can forget there is any motive power on board. 06 05 08c & d

1906 06 22

On Thursday Messrs Bullen, boatbuilders of Magdalene Street started their first trip of the season with their steam launch and tender His Majesty and Queen Alexandra It was a free outing and 84 people availed themselves of the voyage to Ditton Plough when an enjoyable time was spent. 06 06 22b

1906 09 15

River trips, motor launch 'Victory' to Clayhithe – Pocock – 06 09 15b

1906 11 30

Traffic on the Cam – motor boats, byelaw – 06 11 30b & c

1907 08 24

Otter and Otter hound advert – 07 08 24

1907 10 19

Last year there was hardly a punt available, and before that such a thing was not known in Cambridge. Yet this summer every boatyard possessed quite a flotilla of these comfortable craft, which were in great demand. Like golf, punting seems to have contributed in great measure to the humour of the nation and funny spectacles have not been entirely absent from our local ditch. Every dog has his day, and it is pretty evident the 'Canader' canoe has almost had his 07 10 19 [1.5]

1908 06 12

At the bottom of Mill Lane there was a kind of wharf with steps to allow people to get down to the river. Recently Mr Scudamore had fastened a sort of wooden punt as a mooring for pleasure boats, now nobody in a boat could get to the steps without trespassing on it. But no loading of boats had been carried on for nine years, the water was only a foot deep and there had been no complaints. Anybody in a punt could use it, Scudamore claimed. However as the river was a navigable highway, this was an obstruction magistrates decided and fined him five shillings CWN 08 06 12 p2

1909 08 13

A petrol-driven motor boat owned by Mr John Scudamore, boat-builder of Mill Lane, and occupied by a party of five undergraduates caught fire when at the back of King's College and was burnt down to the water's edge. They had experienced difficulties with the 3½ horse-power engine and Mr Scudamore went to their assistance. He was examining it when it burst into flame. The cause is a mystery: nobody was smoking, the engine-bearings were not overheated and there was no escape of petrol. CWN 09 08 13

1909 12 24

The Directors of the Ouse Navigation Ltd have been unable to raise the necessary funds and deposits have been returned to those who subscribed for shares. They had offered £5,000 for the toll-rights and property belonging to the Navigation, which was declined. They expressed surprise at the indifference shown by people in Cambridgeshire. But few people knew about it. Looking through the Files of the C.D.N. and Cambridgeshire Weekly News we are unable to trace any reference to the enterprise. If the Directors did not take the trouble to explain their proposals to the public they can hardly blame the public for not being interested in them. CWN 09 08 13

1909 12 24

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New bye-laws relating to the illumination of chain ferry boats and barges after dark were adopted.
CWN 09 12 24

1910

1910 04 08

Bargemen objected to proposed bylaws regarding lighting on barges saying they can travel more safely without them. Mr Charles Dyson of North Street Burwell said "My barges are required to carry oil, sedge, turf etc and the use of lights might prove dangerous. I have travelled on the river for 40 years and never seen any accident caused by not using lights". E.H. Godby of Littleport says he does a lot of hay and chaff work and cannot afford to have his cargo burnt while Colchester and Ball of Burwell says their boats do not travel at night and see no reason why they should show a light when stationery. Ferry boat owners also say it would be a serious expense to have to keep lights burning all night. 10 04 08 b & c

1910 08 19

George Fawcett Winter, the well-known boat builder, became the proprietor of the boatyard near Victoria Bridge in 1876, succeeding the late Edward Searle. Ten years later he was connected with the boat-building industry at Eton: he used to spend the summer there and the winter at Cambridge. In 1900 he decided to relinquish his Cambridge business which came into the hands of Mr F. Pocock who is now carrying it on. He was well-known amongst University and Town rowing men and took an interest in the affairs of Old Chesterton. 10 08 19h

1911

Viscountess Bury" started [2.12]

1911 06 02

A serious rival to sailing on the river Cam has now to be reckoned with. This is 'botoring' which to the uninitiated stands for motor boating. There are today about 80 of this type of craft of various sizes and power. Now owners have formed the Cambridge Motor Boat Club to work with other river users to make the waterways even more safe and pleasant. Already membership has reached 35 which is proof of the popularity of the sport 11 06 02a

1913

Boathouses guarded due to fear of Suffragette attack [1.8]

1913 05 30

Ebenezer Driver, an Isleham gravel and shingle merchant told the court he owned 16 lighters and a steam tug. He'd delivered eleven lighter loads of sand and gravel to Southery for the Methwold & Feltwell Drainage Board to use as concrete at the pumping station. Heber Martin, surveyor of Littleport said he'd measured the barges and worked out the amount supplied. Joseph Whitehead said he'd carted it from the lighters. But the Board disputed the quantity. The suggestion that being fenland it had acted as a quick-sand and swallowed up the materials could not be accepted since the ground was so hard people could not get a pick into it. It was possible more sand and gravel had been used in making the concrete than they'd allowed for. 13 05 30 p8 CIP

1913 05 30

Two undergraduates told the court they were coming up the Cam in light sculling boats when they met a tug towing a string of six barges belonging to Colchester and Ball of Burwell. The barges smashed their boat and threw them in the river. The bargee said the wind had blown the rear barges across the river and the scull had got nipped between them and the bank, despite attempts by two men with poles to avoid the accident. But a Met Office witness testified there had been little wind that day. The judge said were too many barges in the chain and the back ones would always swing. He spoke from personal experience as an old oarsman on the Cam 13 05 30 p10 CIP

1913 06 06

Cambridge Sea scouts opened their new riverside headquarters at Pocock's Boatyard. It consists of two capital rooms like cabins on board ship, one fitted up as a workshop, the other containing various games. They also launched their new boat, named The Albert, built of pine and elm with six oars and a mast, capable of carrying 10 boys. 13 06 06 p10 CIP

1913 06 27

William Harding testified he'd had charge of a tug and string of six barges belonging to Messrs Colchester and Ball. There were two men on the tug and two more on the hind lighter who were shoving with poles as hard as they could. He'd shouted to warn two undergraduates in a scull to stop, but they just rowed on and been struck. Walter Parr said he knew the 'Nancy'. At one time there had been as many as 20 barges in a string on the river. The keeper at Jesus Lock said he'd known a lot more than six barges in a string and three men were quiet sufficient. 13 06 27 p09 CIP

1913 07 25

Colchester and Ball barge collision undergrad rowers – judgement for the undergrads 13 07 25 CIP

1913 12 19

Motor Boat Club dinner – motor boats and May races; reflections on Conservators – difficult to work with; navigation for commercial interest now practically dead 13 12 19 p3 CIP

1914 02 13

Lighters owned by West Norfolk Manure and Chemical Co had touched the lower sill at Baits Bite Lock. They were carrying about 42 tons but if this was reduced it would not be economical and they would abandon the river and take the materials by rail. The sills could not be lowered without putting in new doors. The uprights are practically decayed and the two ploughs are never used except in emergency. The keeper was fearful of opening the doors and if there were a flood the whole might go. Urgent repairs were needed, the Conservators heard – 14 02 13d

1914 05 08

The Conservators had written to the West Norfolk Chemical Company concerning damage done to the sills at the locks by their barges, owing to their bumping when heavy laden. The Company replied that if they lightened their barges to such an extent that they no longer bumped, it would become cheaper for them to transfer the residuals from the gasworks by rail, which would ruin the traffic on the Cam. They could not lighten the tugs, which were heavier than the barges. The barge Charles, which has been running on the Cam for more than 50 years, drew two inches more water than the present barges 14 05 08, b c

1914 08

Nancy steam barge laid up, used to bring timber Kings Lynn to Cambridge stopped running 30 Aug 1914, previous year takings £409 for 46 weeks work [W.15,NI.3.1] The Nancy was a fine steam tug, one of the largest to be used on the River Cam. She was about 70 feet long with a capacity of about 70 tons and was owned by the Eastern Counties' Navigation Company carrying coal, bricks and timber. The boat was laid up in 1914 because of the war and rotted at her moorings near the railway bridge at Ely until the river was widened in 1947. Then the rusting boat was buried on the Babylon marina site. Four years ago the remains were unearthed and now the stern has been given a permanent home at the Cambridge Museum of Technology in Cheddar Lane 85 11 01

1914-18

Banham build a number of boats for the Admiralty and, through Pye Ltd, undertook contracts for Air Ministry carries out Service contracts. In charge of fire float manned at Banham's expense 53 01 01[1.1]

1915 11 26

Barges on Cam should have cask water for drinking – never made use of them – 15 11 26 p7

1918 10 23

Boat proprietor sued an R.A.F. officer who hired a boat one Sunday afternoon and left it on the Granta to float where it would, with the result that the contents were taken possession of by someone else. They included sculls, three cushions, a tea basket, a flask and cups, saucers and plates 18 10 23 CIPof

1919

Banham buys rowing boat business near Victoria Bridge 53 01 01 [1.1, 2.1]

1920

1922

Cam Conservancy Bill progresses [1.6]

1927 06

Nancy II, 70 foot steelmotor barge built for Banham's makes maiden voyage, unloads at Pike & Eel Banhams bought large steel diesel-driven barge from Holland, really too large & had difficulty in passing through locks & navigate tidal sections; probably insufficient trade & taken out of service after 9 months [W.17, 1.9]. History 85 12 12b

1927 07 07

The Conservators of the River Cam considered a scheme to make the river navigable for cargo boats up to the Quayside near Magdalene Bridge. Mr Banham had recently bought a vessel for conveying cargo and at present it can only come as far as Jesus Lock. There had been no traffic for years and the state of the river was very bad. There was a possibility that the river could be dredged but the Commons Committee had taken a lot of trouble to make Jesus Green a beauty spot and would not sanction the deposit being placed on the Common. 27 07 07

1930

1932 11 04

Cambridge Motor Boat Club decided to take over a new piece of land at Clayhithe to enlarge their present ground. Although some people thought the scheme too ambitious, they could provide tennis courts and bungalows which would be rented for £3 as well as providing a motor way and parking place. Mrs Banham said the Ladies' Committee would contribute £20 towards the costs. 32 11 04g

1933

Last consignment of ammonia water sent by barge from Gas Works

1935 03 22

The new motor tug 'Sheldrake', which has been built for the Great Ouse Catchment Board for use in the Wash, took advantage of the seasonal rise in the water to travel from King's Lynn to St Ives towing a string of barges to collect osiers for the East Stone Bank contract. It is the first time for 20 years that a vessel of this kind has been seen as far up-river. The last vessel to carry a cargo through St Ives arrived in August 1915 with potatoes. 35 03 22a

1936 08 14

Friendly rivalry between the owners of two 50-years-old steamboats led to a unique race on the Cam. 'Kathleen' owned by Mr & Mrs Leach, performed so well that, although the older craft, she beat 'Sunbeam' owned by Mr Barlow of Jesus College by a quarter of a mile over the course from Pretoria Road bridge to Baitsbite and back. An old fire engine boiler was a big help to Mr Leach in the construction of 'Kathleen's engine, which drives the boat at about eight knots 36 05 07 – photo

1936 08 14

A retired schoolmaster, F.J. Fuller, has built a large motor-boat in his back garden in Ascham Road with 'tips' from Mr H.C. Banham. He laid the keel in October and it was launched on August Bank Holiday. It has an engine from an Austin Seven car and features oak and spruce steamed to the

required curves with mahogany lining. The craft has been named 'Butterfly', reviving that of a steam launch that his father had 50 years ago. 36 08 14a

1936 11 07

Model liners built by F.W. Thiem floated in tank in garden at corner Chesterton Hall Crescent – 36 11 07d

1938 09 05

Mr M.C. (Jack Scudamore) served his apprenticeship with Mr J. Stranger, boat builder of Chesterton and, after serving in the Boer War, started business as a boat and launch builder in Mill Lane about 1903. He had considerable success in building motor boats and his craft won prizes for motor boat racing. When the Thames punt became the vogue he turned his attention to the building of this type of boat and was the pioneer of their use on the Backs and Granta. Since the popularity of the punt in Cambridge he has supplied them to users all over the country. 38 09 05c

1939-45

Banham builds boats for Admiralty & Air Ministry; runs fire float throughout the War manned at his own expense 53 01 01 [1.1]

1939 10 23

Mr. A. J. Scudamore was in business with his brother, the late Mr. J. C. Scudamore, who died about a year ago, assisting him in the carrying-on of the well-known business in Mill Lane and the Granta Boathouse. When motor launches were first introduced on the Cam, deceased built several of them, and they attained considerable success in the races promoted by the Motor Boat Club. He was also one of the first members of the club. . In the summer months he was a well-known and genial figure in Mill Lane, being in charge of the new Granta boat houses which he'd helped to plan. 39 10 23, 39 10 27 CIPof

1940

1949 07 22

The Mayor of Cambridge attended the re-opening of the Cambridge Motor Boat Club's pavilion at Clayhithe. The secretary said how fortunate the club had been recently. Last year it was presented with a pair of gates by Rear-commodore H. Lister; since then it had been given a ship's bell, a silver cup by Mr Norman, and now, through the kindness and generosity of Commodore R. C. Pierce, it had a practically new pavilion

1950

1952 12

Death of H.C. Banham [1.1] (CDN 1.1.53 p7)

1953 06 26

A recent decision by St Ives Council to break up and dispose of an historic Fenland lighter – presented last year – has had serious repercussions. Before donating it as a museum-piece Mr R. Cory of Brinkley had received several offers for its purchase from people wishing to convert it into a house-boat. The hatches were not perfect but it could easily have been repaired. There was a considerable 'bash' in the bow as a result of an accident on its last trip when carrying sugar beet. It had sunk because of heavy rain, strong winds and a lack of interest and attention. A half-hearted attempt had made to raise it at the worst possible time. The barge is at present a total wreck outside the Norris Museum 53 06 26

1954 11 05

Death of F.J. Lincoln [1.2]

1957 07 05

The motor vessel 'Phosphorous' lazily riding at her moorings off the 'New Spring' pub is the perfect answer to Cambridge's housing difficulties. It does have disadvantages: all the washing-up water must be pumped from the river and boiled while drinking water has to be obtained and conserved in a tank in the bows. But when the owners are cruising the river it is not an empty house that callers see, just a clear view of the opposite bank. 57 07 05a

1959 11 21

Houseboat sunk near Jesus Lock – 59 11 21b

1960s The Cambridgeshire Collection has detailed newspaper cuttings files from this date

1960 06 17

Members of Chesterton Youth Club have made week-end canoe camping trips down the Granta, Rhee and Brandon Rivers using boats of their own making. No fewer than six two-seater canoes have been built in the Chesterton Evening Centre wood-work room and the finishing touches of paint and varnish are now being applied. The hobby is so popular they will shortly be starting canoe building classes 60 06 17

1961

Banhams become part of Pye group 73 05 31 [2.6]

1962 07 03

H.C. Banham launch first fibre-glass hulled boat – 62 07 03a

1965 07 31

T.S. Moyes of Peterborough navigates 75-foot barge from Cambridge to Lynn to see whether canal traffic can be revived – 65 07 31b

1965 08 14

64-year-old Houseboat at Jesus Lock home to generations of veterinary students since 1958 – 65 08 14c

1969 03 05

Banham's Boatyard old premises being switched to new building to make way for Elizabeth Bridge – 69 03 05

1970

1970 04 03

Two Tees Boat Yard opened by Ernest Tyler and Mo Tyrrell, worked for Banham's – 70 04 03a

1971 03 19

Banhams boatyard transformed from home of traditional craftsmanship to an industrial production line of fibre-glass boats – 71 03 19

1973 07 05

Banhams executives buy back boat hire & chandlery parts [2.7]

1974 07 13

Old wooden barge raised from river bed at Ely & brought to Museum of Technology [2.8]

1975 03 19

Mr Edwin Appleyard's partnership with a Shell oil barge has ended after 18 years. The 60-year old barge was first introduced to the fens from Holland about 1910 and was used for delivering tulip and daffodil bulbs growing in the fens to Ely station. It next became a cargo boat plying between King's Lynn and Cambridge before being bought by Shell in the 1920s. It was then used to supply pumping

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stations with gas oil. Now it has been sold to a canal and passenger boat operator of Manchester 75 03 19

1975 11 20

It looks like plain sailing from now on for one of Cambridge's best known sights, the Viscountess Bury pleasure boat. It was confirmed that a new site for her mooring near the gas works had been approved by Cambridge city council. It means the 87-year-old boat will still be plying the Cam next season. Earlier it looked like it may have had to leave Cambridge as Banham Marine, the firm who own the boat, have to move to a new site at Upware 75 11 20

1976 08 12

Banhams move business to Ely [2.10]

1977 04 22

Plans for marina Logan's way agreed despite protest, opens 77 07 07, (closed 1981 as unprofitable) [2.11]

1978

Baitsbite Lock most expensive in Kingdom through which take boat [3.17]

1980

1980 05 15

The 'Viscountess Bury', best-known pleasure boat on the Cam is in danger of leaving the river – only eight years short of her centenary. Banham Marine have decided to advertise it for disposal on the Thames. It was launched as a battery-powered vessel at Chiswick in 1888 and was patronised by Edward VII. It was bought by H.C. Banham in 1910, fitted with a petrol engine and sailed up the North Sea to the Wash, narrowly escaping loss in a storm outside Wells. Since 1911 she has been regularly used for club outings and private festivities. 80 05 15a

1980 11 25

Viscountess Bury to go up for sale – 80 11 25

1981 01 31

The Viscountess Bury plopped into the Ouse with a new nose, a new right arm and a dud battery. The 93-year-old doyenne of pleasure boats was relaunched at Ely after a refit that included restoration of its figurehead, a well-upholstered Victorian lady. But she would not start and it took over an hour to get her under way. It should be available for hire by the end of April. 81 01 31

1981 05 08

The Viscountess Bury, one of the oldest pleasure boats in the world, has made a come-back after a £10,000 restoration. The 93-year-old boat began the new season with a 16-mile round cruise along the Ouse north from Ely. She originally ran on electricity but is now diesel-powered and ready to ply the rivers, 24-hours a day, for many years to come. 81 05 08

1981 06 24

Scudamore's has decided to close its motor boat marina at Logan's Way, Chesterton – just four years after its controversial plans were given the go-ahead by the city council. The marina was only open for a month last summer and was no longer considered to be profitable. They ran the marina on council-owned land and negotiations are now taking place to work out what to do with the site. 81 06 24c

1981 10 09

Excavation work on a new marina at Annesdale, Ely is unearthing remains of The Nancy, a steam-driven cargo barge which plied the River Ouse until she was laid up in 1914. It was then towed near the railway bridge to be cut up for scrap but the work proved too expensive and it was left to rot until

the 1940's when the Ouse was widened. It was then in the way so Ted Appleyard dug a hole on the Babylon site, dragged it out of the water and dumped her in it. 81 10 09c

1987 06 30

Tyrells Marina began in the 1950s as a company hiring out punts on the river. Gradually business has increased and for 25 years it has operated from premises in Bermuda Road where they sell a range of boats including inflatables, skiboats, sailboats and canoes. 87 06 30

Punts

Punts

1897 12 15

Sir - The fearful state of the Chesterton roads at the present time calls for comment: they are worse than ever. Trees have lately been inserted on either side of this avenue of mud & slime. Omnibuses are running to and fro daily that are a credit to any town, especially are the horses in splendid form ready to take you from Chesterton church to the Cambridge station for twopence! The wear and tear on such roads must be very great. How very surprised people seem to be now-a-days that Victoria Bridge should have been opposed by some people. But the hour has struck when the necessity for another bridge is of equal importance. The folk at Old Chesterton, all employed in Cambridge, have to cross the classic stream either by grind or punt. The sooner both councils wake up to their duty in the matter of this great necessity, the better for people on both sides of the river - "Chestertonian"

1899 07 11

Sir – The population of Chesterton is mainly composed of people who have been turned out of Cambridge to make way for college and other improvements, and nearly all are employed in that ancient town. Every day brings evidence of the great need of another crossing of the Cam & that Abbey Road is the place goes without saying. The De Freville Estate, are absolutely dependent upon the old punts and other obsolete marine structures for crossing over to Cambridge. . It must be conceded that a bridge over this part of the Cam is of the highest importance – “Chestertonian”

1905 08 05

Two undergraduates said they were fishing at Holywell when Baron de Ketschemdorf arrived in another punt and asked them to move. They declined, saying the river was public, at which the Baron said he would throw them in the river. There was a wrestle during which he tried to throttle them. The German said he had driven a pole in the bed of the river showing that he had already occupied that water and it was a point of etiquette not to fish there. The men had threatened to hit him with a bucket. He was fined £1.05 08 05b – d

1907 10 19

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1908 06 05

Considerable annoyance has been caused to the dons of Trinity and St John's by gramophone concerts given by undergraduate punting parties. As the Cam is technically a highway the police were asked to put a stop to the nuisance and a constable patrolled the river in a ‘tub’. As he was rowing quietly along an undergraduate propelled his craft with such force that its gunwale was smashed in and the policeman narrowly escaped a ducking. The lad has now received a summons for ‘obstructing the highway’. CWN 08 06 05 p3

1908 06 12

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1912

Dolby's build punt 59 08 22 [1.3]

1914 08 14

Tom Jolley acted as ferryman at Caron's Ferry at the Pike & Eel, Old Chesterton for 39 years. The ferry is a small punt boat near the larger ferry and is used by members of the University boat clubs who pay the ferryman a termly allowance. It was worked by his father and grandfather before him. Mr Jolley was universally known as 'Caron' and his cheery good nature made him a great favourite. 14 08 14 p4

1926 05 24

An appeal for the modification of the ban on gramophone music has been addressed to the Vice Chancellor on behalf of a party of musical undergraduates. University orders forbid the playing of gramophones in punts on the river during the May terms and gramophone music has been banned from certain colleges altogether. "We have no wish to express any opinion upon the playing of jazz records but suggest the playing of good music, such as the London String Quartet, by students in their hours of relaxation on the river could do nothing but enhance the beauty of the surroundings and the taste of the modern young man", they say.

1926 12 02

The official testing took place of the bridges along the new road through Coe Fen, The Fen Causeway. They are Snobbs' Bridge, Flood Water Bridge and the River Bridge. The last is the most important and five steam rollers and one steam tractor, together weighing 63 tons were driven across it, passing each other, thus making 63 tons rolling weight, equivalent to about 100 tons dead weight. The Cambridge Borough Surveyor and councillors boarded a punt and viewed the deflectometer under the bridge, which gave a satisfactory reading. The foundations consist of 100 piles of 40 feet length, weighing about four tons each

1928 07 28

A great cosmopolitan army has invaded and captured Cambridge. It is no new thing this descent by the legions from overseas but probably never before have they been drawn from so many nations or corners of the world. The 'Backs' heard such a murmuring of strange tongues as would have puzzled the most expert linguist. One reason was the International Geographical Congress attended by members of fifty nations, but ever since the 'Long Vac' started foreign visitors have poured into Cambridge, nearly all armed with cameras and a determination not to miss anything. They saw the river girl – and her flannelled companion – brought out by the heat wave; she was there at the punt pole with her light bright frock, so cool, so self-possessed and efficient, and even in this heat – no shiny noses.

1929 06 14

Punt accident, p5

1933 06 07

The Backs near King's bridge were crowded with punts when the Cambridge University Madrigal Society performed the annual rite of singing on the river. As the sun went down and the moon rose from behind the Gibbs' Building, the cawing of the rooks and the noises of the town ceased, and over

the water came the sounds of a Brahms' motet. An aeroplane buzzed like an angry wasp across the sky but failed to break the spell of magical voices which softly floated in the air. 33 06 07

1938 09 05

Mr M.C. (Jack Scudamore) served his apprenticeship with Mr J. Stranger, boat builder of Chesterton and, after serving in the Boer War, started business as a boat and launch builder in Mill Lane about 1903. He had considerable success in building motor boats and his craft won prizes for motor boat racing. When the Thames punt became the vogue he turned his attention to the building of this type of boat and was the pioneer of their use on the Backs and Granta. Since the popularity of the punt in Cambridge he has supplied them to users all over the country. 38 09 05c

1940 06 07 R.A.F. Man's Rescue.—A Royal Air Force man, Cpl. R. A. Laxton, effected a river rescue at Cambridge on Sunday afternoon. Seeing a man in the water, near the Fen Causeway Bridge, he dived in from the bank and brought him to safety. It is understood that the man, Mr. P. C. Phillips, of Milton Road (Cambridge), had fallen into the water from a punt.

1942 09 17

Punts and canoes placed on NFS reservoir on lawn in front of King's – photo – 42 09 17a

1944 03 08

Salute the Soldier advertisement shows swastika on punt- 44 05 08

1947 08 20

Sir - May I join the protest against the excessive charges now being asked for the hire of a punt on the river. It is within easy memory that it was possible to hire a punt out for an afternoon and evening for five or six persons and still have 10s change from a pound note. I can see nothing which warrants the present-day prices. Is it that the ordinary townsfolk are being slowly squeezed from the river in order to allow the varsity men and the more wealthy visitors to the town to enjoy "our" river? The Borough Council should either consider setting up a municipal boatyard for the hire of punts or investigate the charges with a view to softening the blow to the everyday working-class family of Cambridge - letter from "Constant User"

1947 08 27

Sir - a recent letter in defence of present punt charges prompts me to indulge in some mathematical calculation. At a large boathouse on the upper river I counted seventy punts recently. On any fine summer afternoon there is usually a queue waiting to hire them. Assume that each punt is hired for three hours only at 3s. per hour, and it must be clear that the weekly turn-over must be approximately £200. Deduct from this the wages of four men (say £25), allow £25 for running costs and there is a clear profit of £150 per week - J.A. Parkinson, Newnham Rd, Cambridge

1948 07 15

The River Cam Conservators considered a request from the Eastern Electricity Board to run cables under the river from Magdalene College to Thompson's Lane. The Board propose to cover the cables with bags of cement in order to protect them from punt poles. Mr Burrows informed the meeting that dredging of the river was proceeding most satisfactorily. Following the meeting the Conservators set off for Bottisham Locks on board the "Viscountess Bury", but had barely left Jesus Lock when it became stuck in a sandbank

1950 06 08

In the sweet perfection of a fine tuned evening on the Backs, a record crowd listened to what is surely the loveliest of all events of May Week, the programme of madrigals sung by the Cambridge University Madrigal Society from punts moored beneath King's Bridge. An audience estimated at between 7,000 and 8,000, lined both sides of the bank as the oppressive heat of the day became tempered by the cool of evening. Even the loud moo of a cow in the paddock failed to break the spell,

nor did the faintly-threatening note of a high-flying bomber, reminder of the sterner world out of which the magic of the setting and the sweetness of the singing lifted the listening thousands.

1950 08 09

This year I have noticed a “cosmopolitan invasion” of the river Cam. Practically every other boat one passes is manned by some of our foreign friends and I counted as many as four nationalities in one punt. This intermixing of young people from neighbouring countries is one of the best things that could happen, especially at the present time, and we must feel honoured that they choose Cambridge as the place in which to better international relations!

1951 07 21

Entries for the men’s and boys’ swim through Cambridge broke all records. 104 swimmers came under starter’s order, 98 of whom completed the course. The Mayor saw them off at the start from “The Mill” and then travelled to the finishing post at Jesus Green where he presented prizes. Punts accompanied the swimmers in case of distress. The Adie cup went to Alec Cook who completed the course in 18 minutes, 50 seconds. The Watling Cup (for boys under 16) was won by John Watling, son of the donor but he was actually beaten by his younger brother David, who won the Webb Cup for boys under 14. The youngest competitor was 10 years old Graham Norden who finished in 41 minutes 55 seconds.

1955 05 09

The annual punting race between the Oxford University Charon Club and Cambridge Damper Club is a relay with the lady member of the team acting as baton and hastily jumping from punt to punt at the end of each ‘leg’. For the eight gentlemen on each side it was a perspiring afternoon; both wind, water and pole were playful and both of the ‘batons’ nearly suffered a ducking. Gradually it developed into a cross between a water-polo match and a life-saving exhibition. 55 05 09a

1959 06 10

The banks of the Cam were lined when the Cambridge University Madrigal Society gave its annual concert on the Backs. It was a very English scene: crowds of impassive spectators defied the fickle weather and a forest of coloured umbrellas rose from the punts on the river. Even the roar of a passing aeroplane and the threat of rain never put the singers off their stride. As the strains of the last madrigal – ‘Draw on Sweet Night’- wafted slowly across the river, lanterns were lit and the punts carrying the singers began to move slowly downstream. 59 06 10c & d

1960 006 08

Students lounged on the river banks using their gowns as table cloths for alfresco meals and thousands of people crowded the Backs for the University Madrigal Society’s punt-borne concert. Madrigals for five voices did not carry far against the chilly breeze and aeroplanes (‘most tiresome’ said the conductor, Raymond Leppard) and ducks competed for attention. But the audience listened in rapt silence until the singers’ raft moved slowly away to the strains of ‘Draw on, Sweet Night’. 60 06 08b

1961 07 26

Scudamore’s boat yard at Quayside is experimenting with a prototype fibreglass punt, the first of its kind in Cambridge. The red-and-blue punt with its yellow cushions is much livelier and virtually impossible to overturn or sink. Built in Hull it costs £110, the same as a wooden punt, but the cost of maintenance is much lower. If it proves a success there will be a gradual take-over from the traditional mahogany boats. Scudamore’s already have several fibreglass dinghies and other boat yards have similar canoes 61 07 26

1962 03 27

Robinson Crusoe Island, the strip of grassland in the River Cam between Fen Causeway Bridge and the Mill Pool, is to be developed as a beauty spot. Scudamore’s boat building company will plant flower beds and lay lawns; old tree stumps will be uprooted and an old boat store pulled down. It will probably be used as a stopping-off point for people punting or rowing to Grantchester. Extensive

Please make what use of this you may. Kindly remember where it came from – www.mikepetty.org.uk

works are also being carried out to the river bank along the frontage of the Garden House Hotel as part of a gardens improvement scheme 62 03 27a

1963 03 25

Longstanton farmer's daughter, Sarah Stroude, travelled by punt to reception – 63 03 25b

1964 08 17

'Focus on Cambridge' is a new documentary film seen through the eyes of two tourists as they drift along the Cam in a punt. Made by Norman Mason-Smith of Forgeron Films it is intended for people lecturing on Cambridge or tourists wishing to take home a memento of their visit. It was filmed in Technicolor, lasts 16 minutes and is available in 16mm format for £22 10s [about £370 at today's prices]. Cambridge City Libraries have agreed to take a copy 64 08 17

1964 08 21

Punt owners say trade is bad with eighty per cent of those available for hire lying idle. Until 1950 students would take their books to the river in term time, but they don't do it nowadays. Some hirers use up their £1 deposits and leave the punts, then long-haired types jump in and smash them. Foreign visitors do much of the damage and the French treat the punts a lot rougher Scudamore's say. Their new fibreglass punts have been found too weak: they are too low and not really big or steady enough for hire work 64 08 21d

1965 08 19

Scudamore's introduce fibreglass punt – 65 08 19a

1969 06 05

Steam punt with paddle wheel launched by student – 69 06 05

1971

Scudamores punts sold 71 10 14 [2.14]

1972 07 21

Punt-hire firms, p18

1974 05 07

300 young people mobbed BBC disc jockey "Diddy" David Hamilton as he tried to punt down the Cam and forced him to abandon a live radio broadcast. As he crouched under a plastic mack in a Trinity college punt trying to conduct interviews and introduce records to several million Radio 1 listeners the crowd squirted gallons of water at him and threw pepper. Mr Hamilton, who had been keeping up a radio microphone link with an outside broadcast van at Garret Hostel Bridge was rescued after a chaotic half-hour during which several people including a representative of the city's entertainment department, tumbled into the river.

1975 07 25

Chauffeurpunt started, p17

1975 08 01

It was a wet welcome that Cambridge was offering any tourist foolhardy enough to punt past Sheep's Green bathing place, Newnham. Young swimmers aged about 15 kept up a barrage of dive-bombing from springboards at the bathing place and from the footbridge nearby. A custodian said: "It's a hazard that people who come punting have to put up with. There's no way I can keep an eye on the whole lot: on a busy day there's probably 3,000 people here. Only a few every complain, I think most people enjoy being splashed"

1976 02 12

Punters, p5

1976 06 09

Cambridge chauffeur-punt service on the Backs can go ahead again this summer. Third-year Law student at Trinity Hall, Mr Jeremy Nicholson ran the service for a limited period last year but his application for a new licence was refused by the city council because of complaints from fishermen. Now it has been renewed with conditions about insurance and the condition of the boats.

1979 07 13

Cambridge's first punt restaurant is now in business serving tourists with lunches, strawberries and cream teas and cocktails by candlelight. The venture has been launched by the Cambridge undergraduate son of the Headmaster of Eton. For a mere £3 a head up to eight people can be accommodated for a full strawberry tea to the accompaniment of pre-war music from a pre-war wind-up gramophone. A wide-ranging lunch menu costs £6 and later on as the sun dips behind the University Library there is candlelight for a service of fruit cocktails and cheese. The restaurant comprises two punts lashed together.

1979 07 17

A grocery salesman, Derek Thomson, went on his rounds in the heart of Cambridge by punt to try and beat the traffic problem. His firm supplies many of the colleges and he thinks the river is the quickest and cheapest way of servicing them. He set off from Silver Street and was met at Queens' by their chef, Mr Tony Tingey; then at King's Hugh McCann climbed down almost to water level to meet him. But, distracted by passing tourists Mr Thomson all but caught him a hefty blow to the head with his punt pole. He then glided on towards Clare, the Bridge of Sighs and Magdalene. "It is the obvious way to get around a lot of colleges quickly", he said. But the Queens' chef commented: "the way he's handling the pole he'd do better with a motor boat"

1979 10 16

Time-travelling Dr Who and his companion Romana arrived in Cambridge to meet a university 'professor'. Tom Baker and Lalia Ward, who play the characters, acted out the meeting as part of the latest Dr Who adventures. A BBC film unit is recording location shots for the six-part story to be called 'Shada' which is being made for viewing next year. It opens with the Doctor punting along the Cam and encountering the villain, Skagra, played by 'Colditz' star Christopher Neame. The famous Tardis time-capsule is likely also to play a part. It was safely tied down in the back of a removal van in a Cambridge hotel car park.

1979 12 24

Christmas punters on the Cam were astonished when confronted by a Royal Navy submarine laying quietly at anchor near Queens' College. HMS Zander, one of the new shallow-draught killer submarines arrived under the cover of darkness ending an incredible 10-hour voyage from the coast. The appearance of the sub, armed with the latest American missiles, marked the successful conclusion of a naval exercise designed to test its ability to navigate hostile waters undetected. [An article from a 'Spoof' supplement to the News of 24th December 1979]

1980 06 01

Chanting demonstrators broke through a security cordon at Queens' College Cambridge to protest at a stag night being held by male undergraduates. They 'invaded' from punts and burst through padlocked college gates before marching around outside the dining hall where 150 people were watching two strippers. The entertainment which included a blue comedian and a dirty limerick competition was organised to mark the college's last days as an all-male preserve 80 06 10b

1983 07 16

The occupants of Island Hall, Godmanchester, used to have a punt in the cellars so when the river at the bottom of the garden flooded, the footman could punt his way around the wine bins to make the daily selection. It was just about derelict when Simon Heritage bought it in 1979 for £23,000 and

£200,000 has been spent on its restoration. Today it is quite breathtaking and it is on the market for £250,000. 83 07 16 p12

1984 08 31

Cambridge, considered one of the most beautiful cities in England, gets a hammering in 'Holiday Which'. It is criticised for poor restaurants, exasperating parking difficulties and shortage of good accommodation. There are several tea shops but those which aren't sleazy or overpriced tend to get hopelessly overcrowded at peak times. It is a relaxed place to visit and punting is the best way to see the scenery but take away the colleges and there is nothing left, it says. 84 08 31

1985 03 11

Cambridge's student prince, Prince Edward, has helped to make this year's Rag Week a record-breaker. His appearance in the Rag Revue made the show a sell-out and he is guest-of-honour at the first Charity Ball where the raffle winner will lead off the first waltz with the fair-haired prince. Other rag events included mud wrestling, birdmen leaping from Silver Street Bridge and silly sports such as a tug-of-war across the river and an egg-throwing competition. It ended with punt-jousting and a mixed three-legged rugby match. 85 03 11b # c.02

1985 05 07

Councillors considered proposals for a floating restaurant and waterbus on the River Cam. Two electrically-powered boats would run from Jesus Green through the Backs. One would be used as a quality restaurant and the other provide visitors with a running commentary in various languages. But they would destroy the beauty and serenity of the river; it is not a commercial waterway and there is already a lot of disturbance from punts. 85 05 07a

1985 07 25

Quayside will be transformed with new shops, office buildings, a restaurant and a café with tables spilling outside into the square. Magdalene College's planned development will change the face of one of the city's most important riverside sites. Punting and public rights of way will be retained as will the newly-created cantilevered walkway linking Bridge Street with Jesus Green. The design by Hughes and Bicknell and will be built in narrow two-inch red bricks to match those of the college. 85 07 25a

1986 06 18

A K-registered Ford Escort was found dangling from Clare College bridge. The vehicle came from a scrapyards but it remains a mystery how it got there. One theory is that it was brought down the Cam on punts then hoisted up and lashed into place with ropes and chains. The jolly jape brought laughter from river users but now the college is faced with removing it. They are seeking advice from King's who last year removed a Fiat that was 'parked' in the middle of the river on stilts 86 06 18c

1987 06 30

Tyrells Marina began in the 1950s as a company hiring out punts on the river. Gradually business has increased and for 25 years it has operated from premises in Bermuda Road where they sell a range of boats including inflatables, skiboats, sailboats and canoes. 87 06 30

1987 07 23

The Queen Mother became just another Cambridge tourist for a few moments – and won cheers from a waiting crowd. She paused on the famous Mathematical Bridge to wave to a convoy of four punts chained together as they passed gracefully along the Cam. She was visiting Queens' College to mark the restoration of the President's Lodge, the only half-timbered college building in Cambridge. Lunch – at a college which is now health-conscious in its cuisine – was melon and king prawns, then chicken and truffles. 87 07 23

1988 09 09

A 'park-and-float' scheme is being considered to beat traffic chaos in Cambridge. Commuters would park beside the river at Fen Ditton, Horningsea, Waterbeach or Clayhithe and take a river bus into the city, having breakfast en route and reading the morning newspapers. Meanwhile the Cam Conservators may appoint its own trouble-shooter patrolling from Byron's Pool to Bottisham Lock in a specially-adapted electric craft. He would crack down on unregistered punts and also clear rubbish and broken branches in a new drive against pollution. 88 09 09a

1988 12 15

The former Tivoli cinema building which opened on Chesterton Road in 1925 has been converted into 'The Exchange' with two large cocktail bars and a 120-seater restaurant. Later will come a basement gym, a punt landing stage and a roof garden restaurant with panoramic views over Jesus Green. Entertainment facilities include a huge electronic roll-down screen, the latest audio equipment and closed circuit television relaying film of the dance hall, But great care has been taken to preserve the distinctive atmosphere with plaster ceiling mouldings and a combination of rich dark and red wood 88 12 15a